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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT

SUBJECT: REVOLUTIONARY PARTY SELECTS COL. ERNESTO PAIZ NOVALES
AS ITS NEW PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE

REF: A-212, GUATEMALA 4927

SUMMARY: REVOLUTIONARY PARTY ANNOUNCED ON OCTOBER 17 THAT COL. ERNESTO PAIZ NOVALES WOULD REPLACE PARTY'S SECRETARY GENERAL CARLOS SAGASTUME PEREZ AS ITS PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE. THIS MOVE REFLECTS CONCERN WITHIN BOTH PR AND GOG THAT SAGASTUME WOULD NOT BE A STRONG CONTENDER IN 1974 AND HOPE THAT PAIZ WOULD MAKE A BETTER SHOWING. PAIZ PROBABLY VIEWS HIMSELF AS A POTENTIAL WINNER BUT HE WILL BE HANDICAPPED IN HIS CAMPAIGN BY HIS VICE-PRESIDENTIAL RUNNING-MATE SAGASTUME, WHO REMAINS HIGHLY VULNERABLE TO CHARGE OF BEING GOG PAWN AND BY FACT THAT HE IS APPEALING LARGELY TO SAME VOTERS AS DCG-UNITY CANDIDATE RIOS MONTT. END SUMMARY.

1. FOLLOWING OCTOBER 13 OFFICIAL CONVOCAATION OF PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS TO BE HELD MARCH 3, 1974 (WHICH MEANS PRINCIPALLY THAT THE ACTIVE CAMPAIGNING WHICH HAS BEEN GOING ON IS NOW LEGAL, AND THAT THE REGISTERED PARTIES CAN NOW OFFICIALLY NOMINATE THEIR CANDIDATES), THE REVOLUTIONARY PARTY'S METROPOLITAN COUNCIL ANNOUNCED ON OCTOBER 17TH THAT IT HAD ACCEPTED CARLOS SAGASTUME'S DECISION TO STEP ASIDE AS PR PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE AND HAD OFFERED ITS SUPPORT TO COL. PAIZ NOVALES. THIS ACTION APPEARS TANTAMOUNT TO
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FORMAL NOMINATION OF PAIZ, AND HE ANNOUNCED HIS ACCEPTANCE.

COUNCIL PROPOSED SAGASTUME AS VICE-PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE. IN FIRST PRESS INTERVIEW AFTER NOMINATION, PAIZ DECLARED THAT HE IS AN OLD LINE "REVOLUTIONARY," THAT HE WILL WORK FOR OPPOSITION UNITY, AND THAT PR IS NOT A PAWN OF THE GOVERNMENT.

2. PAIZ' NOMINATION CAME AFTER PR AND GOG RECOGNIZED THAT SAGASTUME DESTINED TO MAKE A VERY POOR SHOWING IN 1974 ELECTIONS. SINCE THE GOVERNMENT'S CURRENT ELECTORAL STRATEGY IS PREDICATED ON RELATIVELY STRONG PR VOTE DRAW TO DIVIDE OPPOSITION, PRESIDENT ARANA CHOSE TO HAVE SAGASTUME STEP ASIDE IN FAVOR OF STRONGER FIGURE FOR PR NOMINATION. WE HAD HEARD PREVIOUSLY THAT SAGASTUME PLANNED TO GIVE PR NOMINATION TO PERALTA AND THAT MONEY HAD ACTUALLY CHANGED HANDS, BUT ARANA FORCED SAGASTUME TO RENEGE ON THAT DEAL, SINCE HE FEARED THAT PERALTA WOULD PROBABLY WIN.

3. PAIZ IS MUCH STRONGER CANDIDATE THAN SAGASTUME AND WILL PROBABLY DO MUCH BETTER; HOWEVER, SAGASTUME'S VICE-PRESIDENTIAL NOMINATION STILL LEAVES PR VULNERABLE TO CHARGE OF ONLY SERVING AS GOG PAWN IN ELECTIONS. PAIZ FACES ANOTHER SERIOUS PROBLEM IN THAT HE WILL IN LARGE PART BE APPEALING TO THE SAME VOTERS AS RIOS MONTT.

4. FOR THE MOMENT, THE PRE-ELECTION PANORAMA APPEARS TO SUIT THE GOG'S NEEDS, WITH DCG CANDIDATE RIOS AND PR CANDIDATE PAIZ DIVIDING THE TRADITIONAL LEFTIST VOTE, LEAVING MLN-PID-CAN COALITION CANDIDATE LAUGERUD WITH THE TRADITIONAL RIGHTIST VOTE,(AND VICTORY). HOWEVER, THERE ARE STILL MANY IMPONDERABLES, INCLUDING ESPECIALLY THE ATTITUDES TAKEN BY COL. ENRIQUE PERALTA AND POLITICAL MAVERICK CLEMENTE MARROQUIN ROJAS AND THEIR SUPPORTERS, AND THE DEGREE OF POPULAR ENTHUSIASM GENERAL RIOS IS ABLE TO AROUSE. THE POLITICAL PANORAMA IS STILL CLOUDY AND LIKELY TO REMAIN SO FOR SOME TIME.
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